

# Inquiry Based Learning in our Elementary Schools

Webster Central School District



**Looking for  
Inquiry...**

**Current State of  
Inquiry  
Learning**



**Our Plans for  
the Future**



# Looking for Inquiry



- More traditional inquiry experiences
- Often teacher lead explorations
- Inquiry not attempted in non-traditional areas
- Few student guided explorations or discoveries
- Many teachers feel unprepared to provide inquiry based opportunities







# Current State of Inquiry Learning

- Instructional Council works to establish foundation for Inquiry Learning
- IC explores inquiry in all instructional areas
- IC members experiment with inquiry based learning
- IC wiki used to share and distribute ideas and successes
- [Examples...](#)

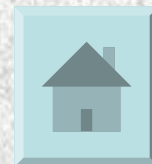






# Minutes from Schlegel Road Instructional Council Inquiry Experiments

- Jeremy: Electricity – put all the materials out and left it up to the kids to try things, got to point of frustration, took an entire session for kids to figure out a solution. Then, read background on topic (rather than reading first)
- Lisa: Tried a launch for matter (oobleck), liquid vs. solid... how to improve questioning (especially when kids are “sure” that they know something to be true), how to help students generate their own questions/make their statements into questions
- Michelle: Reframing a mistake – choice words, “Now we have a problem to solve!”, forcing students to re-do a problem that they did incorrectly by showing proof in manipulatives
- Katherine: Word families with magnetic letters, had students make as many words as they could one letter at a time (create a *process* for solving the problem), along the way they discovered relationships of letters (ex. Certain letters next to each other don’t make sense)
- Greg: Matter unit: keep coming back to the questions, “What do you notice?” “What do you wonder?”
- Beth: Electricity unit – lingering questions became investigation for next time. Students were very engaged, wanted to continue exploring after lesson was “over”.
- Joe/Greg: Project Adventure – kids must communicate, interact, problem solve without a clear answer
- Arleen:
  - Three Types of Inquiry: Structured, Guided, Student Initiated
- Mary: First grade, concentrated on pitch – started with “I wonder” (xylophone – relationship of size of bars to pitch), tried to connect their discovery to piano and struggled with the fact that the piano keys were similar. Then they opened up the piano and discovered the size of the strings correlated to the pitch.







[Discovery Center  
Web Site](#)

# Our Plans for the Future

- IC members work with colleagues to promote and share inquiry learning experiences in all areas
- Web 2.0 tools used to collaborate and share successes
- Science Exploration Center established
- Outdoor Learning Lab constructed

[Courtyard Renovation  
Committee Web Site](#)



# PBL – Past Practice

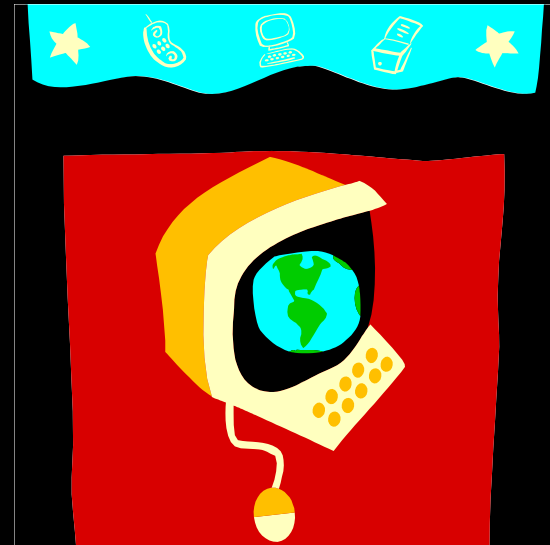
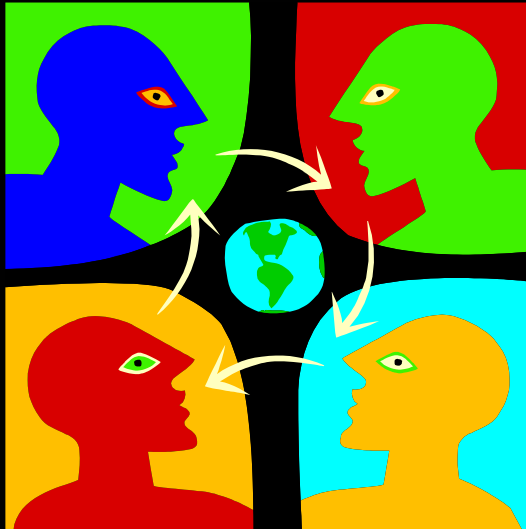
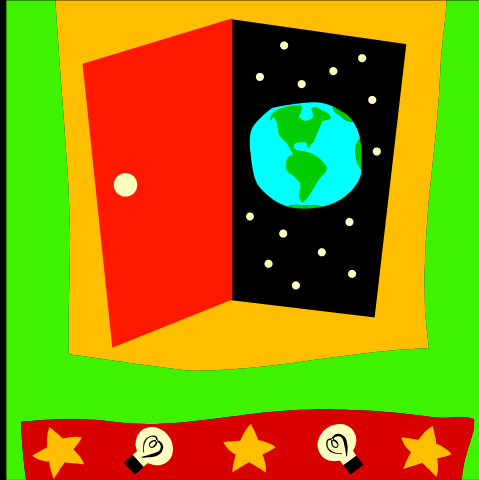




# PBL – Current Practice



# PBL – Powerful Future Practice







# Literacy Power Tools

## PAST

### Fluency

- Less than 10% of reading aloud was done in the classroom with little to no feedback or self assessment (tape recorders, reading to a peer)

### Comprehension

- Often comprehension was limited to the discussion within the classroom without a larger audience or purpose

## PRESENT

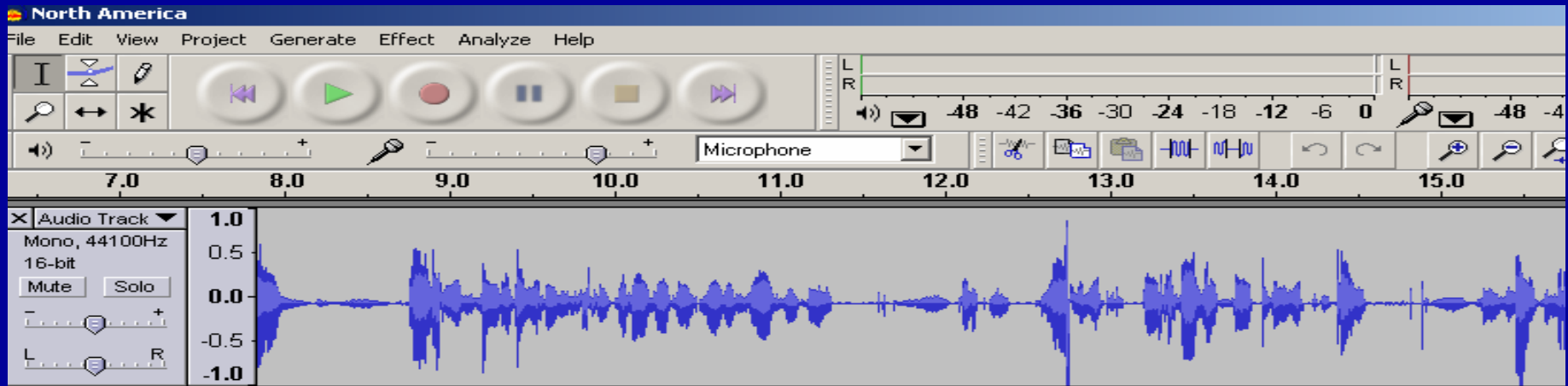
### Fluency

- Instant Visual Feedback
  - MP3 players
  - Audacity
  - Microsoft Photo Story 3
  - Microsoft Movie Maker
  - SMART BOARD

### Comprehension

- Blogs
- Inspiration
- Voice recordings
- SMART BOARD

# Building Fluency





## Future

- Teachers and students will use technology tools regularly to expand and enhance literacy in fluency and comprehension
- Read/Write tools will expand the audience for students' written work, ideas, and higher level thinking about content
- Students will collaborate with each other all over the world about ideas, common readings, and their social stand on different ideas and topics
- Powerful- ADD!